UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General, back at Headquarters after visit to Jamaica, meets with NATO Secretary-General.

- UNPROFOR says missile attacks against areas in which peace-keepers are present, or any military attacks against Bihac safe area, will result in use of NATO air power.

- General Assembly asks Member States and funding agencies to assist Nicaragua's efforts to overcome effects of war and natural disaster; discusses report of Population and Development Conference.

- Croatian Government accepts draft economic agreement put forward by International Conference on Former Yugoslavia; Croatian Serbs to consider document on Saturday.

- Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia tells Special Political and Decolonization Committee UNPROFOR presence has ensured its security, and peace and stability in Balkan region.

- Member States owe United Nations $2.12 billion as of 15 November; $559 million owed to regular budget and $1.56 billion to peace-keeping.

- United Nations appeals to all combatants in Afghanistan to observe cease-fire during first round of mass immunization campaign.

- Special Representative Khan says biggest challenge facing Rwanda is ensuring safe return of refugees from neighbouring countries.

- Economic and Financial Committee hears divergent views on usefulness of UNITAR; United States says Institute has not found its niche, while Nigeria says it is vital part of United Nations system.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali was back at Headquarters today, where he met with the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Willy Claes. Mr. Boutros-Ghali said recently that the meeting would focus on cooperation between the two Organizations, which he described as excellent.

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Before concluding his official visit to Jamaica yesterday, Mr. Boutros-Ghali met with Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). He stressed the importance to the United Nations of close cooperation with CARICOM and other regional organizations. He also expressed appreciation for the Community's active support of efforts to restore democracy in Haiti, particularly for its participation in phase one and its contribution of personnel to the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH).

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The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) today warned the Bosnian Serbs that any further use of SAM 2 missiles against areas in which peace-keepers were present, or any attacks against the Bihac safe area, would result in the use of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) air power. Two missiles today landed harmlessly in farmland near the town of Cazin, several kilometres from a Bangladeshi UNPROFOR position, according to a United Nations spokesman.

Meanwhile, forces loyal to Fikret Abdic have been besieging the town of Velika Kladusa -- the former home base of the rebel Muslim leader -- in an effort to win back ground taken by the Bosnian Government Army earlier this year. The spokesman said those forces appeared to have regrouped from refugee camps in Croatia, and to have been armed and assisted by the Croatian Serbs. It was not known whether Croatian Serb troops had crossed the border, but they had been firing into the Bihac pocket in support of the Abdic offensive.

The spokesman went on to say that the Presidency building in Sarajevo had been hit by three wire-guided anti-tank missiles today, noting that they were classified as heavy weaponry. The building was also hit by rocket-propelled grenades.

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The General Assembly today requested broad and flexible support from Member States and funding agencies for Nicaragua's attempts to overcome the effects of war and natural disaster. In a resolution adopted without a vote, the Assembly asked the Secretary-General, in cooperation with the Nicaraguan authorities, to continue to provide all necessary assistance for the country's reconstruction and development. Assistance should be provided in such areas as the settlement of displaced persons, land ownership and tenure, direct care for war victims, and mine clearance.

The Assembly also began its consideration of the report of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), with particular emphasis on the follow-up to the Conference. Speakers focused on the need to review, adjust and strengthen the plans and programmes of the various United Nations agencies involved. They also highlighted the role of the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in the implementation and monitoring of the Conference's Programme of Action.

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The Croatian Government has accepted a draft economic agreement put forward by the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, while the Croatian Serbs will consider it on Saturday. The Co-Chairmen of the Conference, Thorvald Stoltenberg and Lord Owen, expressed the hope that both parties would soon sign the agreement.

Lord Owen said structures that would provide peace and prosperity for Croats and Croatian Serbs were slowly being established. He went on to say that conclusion of the agreement would be a far more positive step for the Croatian Serbs than involvement in a conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and warned them against any illegal military activity in the Bihac pocket.

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The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) is playing a key role in ensuring the security of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and peace and stability in the Balkan region, that country's representative has told the Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization). He noted that the UNPROFOR presence in The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia represented the first time United Nations military units had been deployed in the interest of preventive diplomacy.

The representative of China told the Committee that respect for State sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs must be reaffirmed to ensure the success of peace-keeping operations. The representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic stressed the need for peace-keeping operations to be of a non-intrusive and non-interventionist nature, and to be mandated only at the request or with the consent of the States or parties involved.

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As of 15 November, Member States owed the United Nations a total of $2.12 billion, according to the latest update on the Organization's financial situation. Of that amount, $559 million was for assessments for the regular budget and $1.56 billion was for peace-keeping operations.

The United States -- the largest debtor -- owed $290 million to the regular budget and $397 million to the peace-keeping budget. The Russian Federation owed $28 million to the regular budget and $537 million to peace-keeping.

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The United Nations today called on all combatants in Afghanistan to observe a cease-fire from 19 to 26 November to ensure the success of the first round of a mass immunization campaign. Sotirios Mousouris, the Secretary-General's Personal Representative and Coordinator of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan, said he had received written assurances of cooperation from the country's political leaders.

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The campaign is being organized by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Afghan Ministry of Public Health, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). It aims to reduce the number of children dying from preventable diseases in Afghanistan, and to strengthen routine immunization services throughout the country. In the first round, children will be vaccinated against measles and polio, while their mothers will be vaccinated against tetanus. In addition, all children under five years of age will be given a vitamin-A supplement where vaccine storage facilities exist.

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The biggest challenge facing Rwanda is ensuring the safe return of refugees from neighbouring countries, according to Special Representative Shahryar Khan. In an interview with United Nations Radio, he said the United Nations and the international community had to put an end to the intimidation of refugees in camps near the Rwandan border.

One option for consideration by the Security Council would involve separating politicized elements from ordinary refugees, Mr. Khan continued. However, those refugees would have to be moved into new camps, and that would entail tremendous logistical efforts at great expense. Another option would involve deploying foreign troops to help "neutralize" the politicized elements. He stressed that the options being considered could not work without the full support of the Rwandan Government. They would also require the backing of the Governments of Zaire, Tanzania and Burundi, he added.

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The Second Committee (Economic and Financial) has heard divergent views on the mandate, reform and usefulness of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). The representative of the United States said his country was not yet convinced that the Institute had found its "niche" in the United Nations system, or that its training activities could not be performed by other United Nations bodies. He added that UNITAR must demonstrate that its programmes justified the expense of a separate United Nations agency.

The Acting Director of UNITAR, Marcel Boisard, said the Institute had found a niche which proved the validity of its mandate, and which now had to be consolidated. The representative of Nigeria said UNITAR had been turned from a moribund and forgotten body into a research and training centre that was a vital part of the United Nations system. He called on the Institute to maintain its mandate and identity, and not allow itself to be submerged into any other United Nations agency.

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